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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Fiftieth session

AGENDA

1. Opening of the session

2. Election of officers

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

4. Annual theme: Strengthening Partnership to Ensure Protection, also in Relation to Security

5. Reports on the work of the Standing Committee

   (a) International protection

   (b) Programme, administrative and financial matters

6. Consideration and adoption of programme budgets

7. Reports relating to programme oversight

8. Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2000

9. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee

10. Any other business

11. Adoption of the report of the fiftieth session of the Executive Committee

12. Closure of the session

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Fiftieth session

REPORT OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (28-29 September 1999)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency, Ambassador Victor Rodriguez Cedeño (Venezuela). He informed the Standing Committee that delegations of Honduras and Sri Lanka had requested to participate in meetings of the Standing Committee during 1999 as Observers, and suggested that their participation begin immediately, in line with the Executive Committee's decision on Observer participation taken in 1998 (A/AC.96/911). Delegations agreed to this proposal. Agenda items 3, 6 and 7 were chaired by His Excellency, Ambassador Raimundo Pérez-Hernández y Torra (Spain), Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND THE REPORT OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

2. The agenda (EC/49/SC/CRP.21) was adopted without revision. The *Draft Report of the Fifteenth Meeting* of the Standing Committee (EC/49/SC/CRP.20) was adopted with one amendment to paragraph 52.

III. INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER

3. The Assistant High Commissioner introduced the new Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Frederick Barton, who has assumed his new functions as of August 1999. The Assistant High Commissioner informed delegations that the Deputy High Commissioner had come to UNHCR with substantial experience in the private and public sector, as well as most recently, in a key position in the United States Agency for International Development. His past responsibilities, coupled with his thorough knowledge of many of the regions where UNHCR operates, were welcomed as a great asset to the work of the Office.

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4. The Deputy High Commissioner then briefly addressed the Committee, stating that it was a great honour to have joined UNHCR. He said that refugee work was a most noble undertaking and expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to help advance the cause of the uprooted. Likewise, he looked forward to being part of UNHCR's senior management. During this initial period, he explained that he would focus on becoming familiar with the work and issues facing UNHCR. He also looked forward to listening to the views of the delegations at the Standing Committee and engaging in a constructive dialogue with them.

5. The Chairman of the Executive Committee took the opportunity to welcome the new Deputy High Commissioner on behalf of all the Members of the Committee and assured him of their full support.

IV. PROGRAMME AND FUNDING

6. Under this agenda item, the Standing Committee gave consideration to an update on UNHCR's programme funding situation, a strategic oral presentation on Asia and the Pacific, and a Mid-Year- Progress Report on UNHCR's activities in the first half of 1999. In their statements, delegations welcomed the new Deputy High Commissioner.

A. Update on programme funding

7. The Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service provided an update on the situation of UNHCR programme funding. He began by reviewing the status of funding of UNHCR's operations for the current year, including revisions to budgetary requirements, and ended with a forecast for the remaining part of the year and for the year to come. In concluding, the Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service urged donors to pay projected contributions as soon as possible to enable the Office to continue implementing essential programmes. The Chairman expressed concern over the funding situation of the Office and appealed to delegations to facilitate a more predictable and stable level of funding for UNHCR's programmes. Early and predictable funding would ease the transition to the new unified budget in 2000.

8. Delegations taking the floor expressed a common understanding that current and projected funding shortfalls both for General and Special Programmes are a cause for concern. Delegations recognized that the predictability, timeliness and quality of contributions have an impact on UNHCR programmes. The strong focus on the Kosovo crisis has placed huge demands on all concerned, and delegations urged that attention be given to other programmes, including in Africa. Several delegations announced important contributions.

9. One delegation commented in detail on the 1998 *Global Report* and while being appreciative of its form and contents, suggested that more emphasis be placed on the impact of programmes, their evolution, progress made, constraints and lessons learned. Another delegation pointed at the need to expand the donor base so as to enlarge the ownership of the Office.

10. Responding, the Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service expressed gratitude for the encouraging interventions as well as the confirmation of substantial contributions, most of which, he clarified, are

already part of UNHCR's funding projections. He expressed UNHCR's intention to make the next *Global Report* less focused on facts and more on impact. An effort to move in this direction is already demonstrated in the presentation of the UNHCR Annual Programme Budget for the year 2000. The Chairman added that issues related to resource mobilization for the unified budget, the *Global Report* and *Mid-Year Progress Report* will be subject to further consultations later in the year.

B. Asia and the Pacific

11. The Director for the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific provided a summary of recent developments concerning the crisis in East Timor and UNHCR's role and activities in response. He also expressed the Office's satisfaction concerning the successful return of 264 Lao residents of Ban Napho camp in Thailand, which took place on 28 September 1999.

12. Many delegations pointed to the East Timor crisis as the most significant protection challenge in the Asia-Pacific region in recent times, and expressed concern at the forced displacement of East Timorese to West Timor and the role of the militias in this regard. They welcomed the role of UNHCR in the Timor operation and the rapidity of the Office's response, as illustrated by the recent visit of the High Commissioner to Indonesia. Delegations also expressed their appreciation for the commitments made by the Government of Indonesia in regard to UNHCR's activities in relation to the Timor crisis. Some delegations announced their intention to contribute financially to the operation and called for an early launch of the consolidated appeal in this regard. Other delegations requested clarification concerning the coordination framework within which the United Nations, international organizations and non-governmental agencies would operate. The importance of the issue of the security of humanitarian personnel involved in this operation, was also emphasized by many delegations.

13. Concern was expressed by some delegations regarding the residual refugee populations in the region, notably the Vietnamese in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China and the indigenous Muslim population from northern Rakhine State of Myanmar in Bangladesh. Calls for an early solution to the situation of these populations were also made. Many delegations also referred to the importance of burden-sharing in respect to refugee populations on the region.

14. UNHCR activities in relation to refugees on the Thailand/Myanmar border and the successful conclusion of the repatriation of Cambodian refugees from Thailand were also commended by certain delegations. Other delegations welcomed the progress made by the Asia-Pacific Consultations (APC) and the forthcoming sub-regional meetings to be convened by this forum. Satisfaction was also expressed by certain delegations with respect to the International Symposium on Migration and its Bangkok Declaration.

15. The Assistant High Commissioner then offered several comments on the issue of security. He informed delegations that since the discussion on security in refugee populated areas at the Standing Committee meeting in February 1999, UNHCR had continued a useful dialogue with various Governments and partners, as well as with the United Nations in New York on this issue. In this context, UNHCR was very pleased that many of the ideas originally put

forward by the High Commissioner were reflected in the latest Report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

16. Increasingly it was felt within UNHCR that the focus, however, should not be restricted to security inside refugee camps, but should encompass security in the wider context of refugee and returnee populated areas. It was often because of security problems around camps that insecurity spread to the camps themselves. The Assistant High Commissioner reiterated that providing security was primarily a State responsibility. This was an aspect which, for example, the High Commissioner had stressed in her recent discussions with the Indonesian Government in Jakarta in relation to the displaced persons in West Timor. Linked to this, there were situations in which States were not fully capable of ensuring security for refugees. It was in such cases that UNHCR felt it could play a useful role in cooperation with relevant partners.

17. With regard to the "ladder of options", UNHCR had recently made efforts to implement this concept, most notably in the context of the Kosovo emergency. In view of the insecurity in Kukes, northern Albania, for example, many of the refugees had been relocated away from the border. In The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in agreement with the Government, UNHCR had deployed a number of international monitors seconded by Sweden to the refugee camps. The deeper UNHCR examined the issue of the ladder of options, however, the more convinced it became that the real challenge was for the Office to link up with all its concerned partners to develop and operationalize the middle options, such as deployment of monitors or observers and use of stand-by security arrangements. The Assistant High Commissioner informed delegations that the High Commissioner would elaborate on this matter in her opening address to the plenary session of the Executive Committee on 4 October 1999.

C. Mid-Year Progress Report

18. The Director of the Division of Communication and Information introduced the *Mid-Year Progress Report*, stating that it provided a broad overview of UNHCR's activities in the first half of the year, with figures provided as of 30 June 1999 for both General and Special Programmes. He described the Report as part of a new trilogy of reports prepared by UNHCR which also included the *Global Appeal* and the *Global Report*. He expressed hope that this new system of reporting on UNHCR's programmes would provide a more timely review of UNHCR's activities during the year, allowing donors to make funding decisions in the latter part of the year.

19. General support for the recently initiated process of reporting on UNHCR activities was voiced, although a request was made to receive documentation earlier so that it could be examined in more detail before being considered in the Standing Committee. Delegations suggested that the relation between outputs and results achieved should be more clearly indicated, as well as a greater focus on achievements which were linked to budgets and expenditure and an indication of the consequences of shortfalls in funding targets. Efforts to prioritize programmes also needed to be more clearly indicated in the document and it was suggested that levels of funding should be presented in percentages. The sections on women, children and the environment were welcomed by delegations. Some delegations expressed concern over the

country-specific text in the document. Inconsistencies in the presentation of financial data were also pointed out.

20. In replying to comments by delegations the Director stated that the *Mid-Year Progress Report* was a "working document", giving a snapshot of UNHCR activities in the first half of the year which could be compared against the *Global Appeal*. It was not an overview of all of UNHCR's activities. He said that greater focus on achievements would be incorporated in future Reports. He informed delegations that financial data inconsistencies were largely due to difficulties in tracking General Programme expenditure, but that the new unified budget format would facilitate better monitoring and improvements should be seen over the next two years with the implementation of the Operations Management System.

V. PROTECTION/PROGRAMME POLICY

21. Under this agenda item, the Standing Committee had before it three documents for discussion, *Refugee Women and a Gender Perspective Approach* (EC/49/SC/CRP.22), *UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacity* (EC/49/SC/CRP.23) and *Social and Economic Impact of Massive Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries, as well as other Countries: Addressing the Gaps* (EC/49/SC/CRP.24).

A. Refugee women

22. The Director of the Division of Operational Support introduced this item, drawing attention to the related document, EC/49/SC/CRP.22.

23. Delegations welcomed the report on activities for refugee women and gender mainstreaming, commending UNHCR on adopting a progressive gender approach in order to promote equality between refugee women and men, girls and boys. Several delegations reminded the Standing Committee that promoting a gender equality perspective does not imply an end to projects targeting refugee women

24. Strong support for a revision of the Policy on Refugee Women to include the recommendations contained in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the 1997 Economic and Social Council report on gender mainstreaming was expressed. Reference was made to the Policy on Gender and Humanitarian Crisis developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Several delegations also expressed support for revising the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women to more adequately address domestic violence against refugee women. Guidance on gender based persecution as a basis for claiming asylum was also requested by several delegations.

25. Building a culture of accountability was highlighted and delegations noted the importance of gender sensitive performance indicators and dissemination of lessons learned as tools to assist staff to meet their responsibilities to refugee women. Several delegations looked forward to reports on progress made under the Kosovo Women's Initiative.

26. Some delegations expressed concern that current budgetary constraints might negatively impact programmes for refugee women. They noted that improved mainstreaming in existing programmes will ensure that refugee women and men are equally protected and assisted.

27. An update on the strategy for mainstreaming a gender equality perspective, as well as, responses to shortcomings identified in the March 1999 Survey on Compliance with UNHCR's Policy Priorities, was requested by two delegations.

B. UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response capacity

28. This item was presented by the Director of the Division of Operational Support. In her initial statement, she drew attention to the conference room paper entitled *UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacity* (EC/49/SC/CRP.23). She also introduced the newly appointed Chief of the UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response Section. The new Chief of Section underlined the importance of training in maintaining a response capacity and gave a brief account of the recent Workshop on Emergency Management training held in Denmark from 19 to 27 September 1999.

29. UNHCR was commended by several delegations for the mechanisms already in place to respond to emergencies. Some delegations, however, expressed concern that UNHCR had not been adequately prepared for the Kosovo operation. The fact that UNHCR could not be expected to adequately prepare for emergencies if funds were not in place to provide for stockpiles and ensure capacity was stressed by one delegation. The need for better use of available external resources was also underlined.

30. Several delegations asked UNHCR to give a higher priority to developing a more effective "early warning system". The importance of the collection of information, analysis and the development of response models, including new models for pragmatic responses to different situations now confronting the international community, was stressed. The need for contingency plans covering a range of scenarios was underlined. Delegations emphasized the importance of collecting data in areas considered to be "high risk". The need for preventive action was raised by a number of delegations. Several delegations spoke of UNHCR's need to increase its visibility and to ensure better coordination. The importance of strengthening local capacity was also emphasized. Delegations spoke of their desire to strengthen their partnership with UNHCR and accepted the offer of the Director for more discussion on the subject.

C. Social and economic impact of massive refugee populations on host developing countries, as well as other countries

31. The conference room paper *Social and Economic Impact of Massive Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries, as well as Other Countries: Addressing the Gaps* (EC/49/SC/CRP.24) was introduced by the Director of the Division of Operational Support. The Director pointed out that the paper should be read in conjunction with two papers submitted to previous Standing Committee meetings: *Social and Economic Impact of Large Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries* (EC/47/SC/CRP.7, presented to the sixth meeting of the Standing Committee in January 1997) and *Economic and Social Impact of Massive Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries, as well as other Countries: A Quantitative Assessment on the Basis of Special Case Studies* (EC/48/SC/CRP.40, presented to the thirteenth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 1998).

32. A number of delegations observed that voluntary repatriation should remain the preferred durable solution and as such should receive adequate international attention and support. Furthermore, some delegations stressed that local integration, which they viewed as a difficult and complex issue, should not be seen as an alternative to voluntary repatriation.

33. Several delegations also observed that the gap between relief and development is not the only one that requires addressing, stating that it is of paramount importance to also focus on the root causes of the problem as an essential preventive measure. It was felt that the international community should likewise be engaged in addressing this gap.

34. Many delegations expressed support for the two-pronged approach proposed by UNHCR in the conference room paper and acknowledged that the impact-related rehabilitation element should be systematically presented as an integral part of country assistance development plans. It was also recognized that a comprehensive regional and integrated approach would best address the gaps between refugee aid and development.

35. Numerous delegations further noted that the above challenges and objectives require stronger resource mobilization, given the increasingly heavy burdens that developing countries have to shoulder in hosting massive refugee populations. There was, therefore, general agreement that through its catalytic role, UNHCR should support host governments in bringing in development partners -- both bilateral and multilateral -- at the earliest stage of refugee situations, and establishing the necessary linkages and mechanisms to address the impact issues. One delegation stressed the necessity of close coordination between partners at all stages to avoid duplication of efforts.

36. Concerns were also voiced by a number of delegations regarding the uneven response of the international community to refugee situations, along with regret over the lack of funding, especially when it is attributed to political reasons. With these concerns in mind, several delegations expressed their support for the Brookings Process, which aims, *inter alia*, to address this "level-of-interest `gap'" on the part of the donor community.

37. Support was also expressed by many delegations for the ad hoc meeting proposed in the conference room paper, with the understanding that this should not replace the discussions in the Standing Committee. In this connection, it was proposed by several delegations that the subject matter should remain on the agenda of the Executive Committee, and that the time has come to translate rhetoric into concrete action.

VI. COORDINATION

38. The Head of the Secretariat and Inter-Organization Service provided an oral update on developments in inter-agency coordination within the United Nations system for the period from June to September 1999. She highlighted the recent work of the main inter-agency bodies and drew attention to the linkage between their activities and the work of the Standing Committee. Delegations were informed of preparations for the Fall 1999 session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), as well as the IASC. An update on the work of the Executive Committees for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and for Peace and Security (ECPS) was provided, noting that these

Committees had held several meetings since June 1999 on a number of regional situations, including Kosovo, Angola, East Timor and Sierra Leone. UNHCR had been actively involved in these discussions. UNHCR also closely monitored the discussions during the Humanitarian Segment of the Economic and Social Council and the follow-up to the Agreed Conclusions of the Segment and was in the process of determining its role within the IASC and the ACC with regard to this follow-up process.

VII. MANAGEMENT, FINANCE, OVERSIGHT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

39. The Director for the Division of Resource Management provided delegations with a general introduction to this agenda item. He drew attention to and commented on the various documents before the Standing Committee.

A. Finance and oversight

40. The Director presented the *Voluntary Funds Administered by the High Commissioner: Accounts for the Year 1998* (A/AC.96/915). He noted that the Office had received a positive, unqualified certification from the Board of Auditors (*Audit Opinion* (A/AC.96/915/Add.1)).

41. In relation to the *Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the Accounts of the Voluntary Funds Administered by UNHCR for the period ended December 1998* (A/AC.96/917), the Director drew attention to the principal recommendations of the Board as found in paragraph 12 of its Report. UNHCR actions to date to follow up these recommendations were set out in *Measures Taken or Proposed in Response to the Recommendations in the Report of the Board of Auditors* (A/AC.96/917/Add.1).

42. In their comments on this agenda sub-item, delegations expressed appreciation of the work of the Board of Auditors. The need for the Standing Committee to keep under review, in the course of the coming year, the issues raised by the Auditors and UNHCR's follow-up to the recommendations was emphasized. More specifically, delegations expressed concern about some of the specific recommendations, in particular, the non-compliance by implementing partners with audit certification requirements, staffing levels, outstanding travel claims and the slow progress in relation to a number of Project Delphi recommendations. The need for UNHCR to develop a strategy, in consultation with the Board of Auditors, to ensure better compliance by implementing partners in the area of audit certification was stressed by several delegations. In his reply to delegations, the Director informed delegations that there had been a marked improvement in the receipt of audit certificates over the past year.

B. Financial rules

43. In introducing this item, the Director for the Division of Resource Management stated that in light of a new unified budget, single operational reserve and Board of Auditors recommendations, new financial rules had been formulated. The proposed changes were to be found in bold print in document EC/49/SC/CRP.25. These financial rules had been reviewed and endorsed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and had been submitted to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

44. Delegations expressed general satisfaction with the proposed amendments. One delegation raised a number of issues, including the level of the Working Capital and Guarantee Fund and procedures for handling end of year balances of Supplementary Programmes.

45. Subject to the satisfactory resolution of these issues and the incorporation of the amendments suggested by the Standing Committee members, the related draft decision was adopted (Annex).

C. Annual Programme Budget

46. This agenda item was introduced by the Director of the Division of Resource Management and the Director of the Division of Operational Support, who drew attention to UNHCR's Annual Programme Budget for the year 2000 (A/AC.96/916) and Addendum 1. Delegations were informed that Addendum 1 represents an update of the budget document. The tables in the main budget document present figures as of 31 May 1999. Addendum 1, in addition to presenting needs for the Kosovo emergency and Zambia, updates the tables of the main budget document to 1 August 1999. In addition, the Standing Committee had the report of the ACABQ on the budget (A/AC.96/916/Add.2).

47. In the initial statements by the two Directors, it was stressed that this first presentation of a unified budget was a "work in progress". The comments of the ACABQ on the structure of the document and the need for a document with more concise and focused narrative (A/AC.96/916/Add.2, paragraph 4) were highlighted.

48. Attention was also drawn to the level of the proposed Annual Programme budget for the year 2000, as found in the draft decision (A/AC.96/916/Add.1, paragraph 7(c)); the proposed Annual Programme budget for the year 2000 amounted to $ 933,553,000. The ACABQ in its Report had concluded that the projections were realistic and, therefore, had not proposed any adjustment to the programme budget (A/AC.96/916/Add.2, paragraphs 13 and 32).

49. In addition to approving the 2000 Annual Programme Budget, the Executive Committee will be asked to approve the revised 1999 General Programmes budget (A/AC.96/916/Add.1, paragraph 7(d)) amounting to $ 413 million, the same as that approved last year by the Executive Committee. The various budget lines that go to make up this total, however, have been adjusted in accord with the authorization given by the Executive Committee to the High Commissioner.

50. Delegations in their interventions expressed appreciation for the new budget document. One delegation was of the opinion that any review of the structure of the document should take into account the other related documentation now available to the Standing Committee, namely the *Global Appeal*, the *Global Report* and the *Mid-Year Progress Report*. Several delegations expressed regret that the budget document did not indicate priorities among the programmes included in the budget. In addition to leaving donors uncertain about such priorities, the lack of stated priorities could encourage donors to earmark their contributions. One delegation also noted that the budget still did not present a budget line for the delivery of international protection. A number of delegations asked that within the proposed budget level, more resources be allocated for activities related to refugee women, children/adolescents and evaluation. One delegation felt that the budgetary requirements for the South-Eastern Europe operation needed to

be reviewed. Another delegation felt that there was an inconsistency in statistics in one instance. Given the importance that should be attached to redressing the social and economic impact of large refugee influxes on host countries, one delegation asked that an additional objective be added to the country presentation.

VIII. UPDATE ON KOSOVO EVALUATION

51. The Assistant High Commissioner made a few brief remarks on the independent Kosovo evaluation. As an initial comment, he recognized that all concerned actors involved in the Kosovo emergency (Governments, United Nations, NGOs and even the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)) were taken by surprise by the reaction of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the NATO bombing campaign and, most notably, by the speed, dimension and nature of the forced displacement of people. The initial response of the international community -- including that of UNHCR -- had therefore been somewhat slow and confused. He underlined that UNHCR had originally decided to launch an independent Kosovo evaluation in late May 1999, at a time when the Office was involved in three major operations and dealing with the huge influx of Kosovars into the neighbouring countries, as well as planning for winterization and return. This decision was then formally presented to the Standing Committee in June this year.

52. The Assistant High Commissioner said that from the very outset, UNHCR had made it clear that it wished this to be an independent evaluation. Moreover, UNHCR felt strongly that it should not be an academic exercise aimed at assigning fault or credit but, rather, an exercise that would enable the international community -- and not least UNHCR -- to draw the necessary lessons so that it could respond faster and more effectively to future emergencies. In this context, the evaluation was considered to be a forward-looking undertaking.

53. The Assistant High Commissioner then gave a short update on the work and proposed timetable for the evaluation, as follows:

- This was an independent evaluation, funded and facilitated by UNHCR. Team members were identified on the basis of their independence, evaluation expertise, understanding of refugee issues and familiarity with the Balkans. Nationality and gender considerations were also taken into account. In view of the limited time available to establish the evaluation team, competitive bidding was not undertaken. No restrictions would be placed on the work of the team, and UNHCR would not have the right to edit or amend the text of the evaluation report.

- The decision to commission the independent evaluation was taken in late May 1999, and the terms of reference were drafted by early June 1999. Identification and recruitment of the team members was undertaken in mid and late June 1999. The team started work in Geneva on 4 July 1999. Three weeks were spent collecting relevant documentation and interviewing UNHCR staff, other agencies and permanent missions. After leaving Geneva the team also undertook interviews and data collection in Brussels, New York and Washington. The team travelled to the Balkans on 19 September 1999 and visited Albania, Kosovo, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro. They would soon visit Rome and Vienna. The team had agreed to the request made by some Executive

Committee Members to give an informal briefing on their work at 9 a.m. on 7 October 1999. The briefing would take place on the margins of the fiftieth plenary session of the Executive Committee, but would not be part of its agenda as such. The team would then undertake additional interviews in London on 20 and 21 October 1999.

- The team would then present its preliminary findings and recommendations to a meeting of IASC and Humanitarian Liaison Working Group members at a two-day "stakeholder" meeting in Geneva on 11 and 12 November 1999. They would then prepare and present their final report to the High Commissioner. This was originally scheduled to be issued by the end of the year, but the team has requested an extension until February 2000.

54. The Assistant High Commissioner explained that, since the idea of the evaluation had arisen, the scope of the planned undertaking had increased substantially and now a much more comprehensive exercise was foreseen. Needless to say, this would require more time and work than originally planned. It would therefore also cost more. In this context, UNHCR hoped that Member States would be receptive to appeals for additional financial support. If this was not forthcoming, other evaluations planned over the coming months may suffer for lack of sufficient resources.

55. One delegation asked whether the independent evaluation would address and make recommendations on the application of international protection principles. The Assistant High Commissioner responded that, indeed, the exercise was expected to address protection aspects -- such as admission to safety, security at the borders, the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme, reception of refugees in Europe, etc. -- which were a key aspect of the Kosovo emergency operation. He added that by next week the Terms of Reference of the independent evaluation team would be shared with Members of the Executive Committee.

56. Another delegation expressed disappointment that the independent evaluation could not be completed before the plenary session of the Executive Committee, stating that this would have been a very appropriate opportunity to discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. It was hoped that the exercise could be finalized as soon as possible. This concern regarding the delayed issuance of the evaluation was echoed by another delegation and added that they looked forward to working closely with UNHCR to improve the Office's emergency preparedness and response capacity. It was pointed out that UNHCR had been the subject of some criticism in the context of the Kosovo emergency operation and, therefore, it was considered particularly important that a fair and neutral evaluation of the operation be carried out. The conclusions of the exercise would be important in helping to enhance the emergency response of the international community.

57. In response, the Assistant High Commissioner stressed that UNHCR also shared the impatience of some Member States. At the same time, however, there was a need to be realistic. A truly independent and comprehensive evaluation took time. Moreover, he recalled that this evaluation had been originally activated at the time of a massive influx and, since then, UNHCR had been grappling with the return of some 800,000 Kosovars. It had therefore been very difficult to accelerate the process. He appealed for understanding from Governments.

58. In conclusion, the Chairman made a few remarks regarding his recent visit to Albania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in July 1999. The objective had been to obtain a first-hand impression of the situation on the ground, as well as to convey a message of solidarity to the asylum countries and thank them for their generosity in receiving such large numbers of refugees. He will be presenting his report on the mission at the forthcoming plenary session of the Executive Committee.

IX. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

59. One delegation took the floor to express thanks to UNHCR, donor governments, the Government of Mexico, non-governmental organizations and the refugees themselves in facilitating the completion of the repatriation programme to Guatemala. The international community was urged to assist in developing the zones of return and ensure the durability of return.

60. The Chairman thanked the delegation for bringing this important solution of a refugee problem to the attention of the Standing Committee. There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting.

DECISION ADOPTED BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE AT ITS SIXTEENTH MEETING

I. DECISION ON THE FINANCIAL RULES

The Standing Committee,

Having considered the revisions of the Financial Rules for Voluntary Funds Administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees, set out in conference room paper EC/49/SC/CRP.25,

Endorses the revised Financial Rules to be promulgated by the High Commissioner on 30 September 1999, with effect from 1 January 2000.